

Representative Town Meeting of Darien, CT RULES COMMITTEE

Minutes of Regular Meeting, February 13, 2006

8:15 p.m., Town Hall, Room 213

Committee Attendance: K. Armour, J. Davis, D. Maroney, M. Pontius, B. Puzyk, B. Rayhill, V. Riccardo, G. Swenson, M. Thorne, J. Warren, V. Wenger

Absent: S. Morton, H. Pegler

Ms. Armour called the meeting to order at 8:15 p.m. The purpose of the meeting was to review the status of pending items and to create the agenda for the RTM's March 20, 2006 meeting.

Ms. Armour noted that she had added an item to the Agenda as distributed at the meeting, namely: the appropriation of \$100,000 for landscaping at DHS, which has been donated to the Town by Mrs. Frank Cary. Mr. Thorne remarked that he would also like to add an item to the Agenda, namely: the creation of a sub-Committee of the Rules Committee to draft non-partisanship rules for the RTM. The Committee unanimously agreed to add these items to its Agenda for the meeting.

Observing that one purpose of the meeting was to review the status of pending items, Mr. Davis reported that he has created a spread sheet to chart the progress of all matters that have been referred to the Committee and the RTM's Standing Committees since 2004. The Committee then accepted the minutes of its 1/4/06 meeting without objection.

The Committee then set about to assign the following matters to RTM standing Committees:

- **DHS Cost Overrun and \$2.4 million Appropriation:** It was noted that this appropriation has been approved by both the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance. The Committee unanimously agreed to assign it to the **Education** (primary) and **F&B** (secondary) Committees. Later in the meeting, the Committee unanimously agreed to place this matter on the Agenda for the RTM's 3/20/06 meeting.
- **Planning & Zoning Legal Fees and \$110,000 Appropriation:** This appropriation has been approved by the Board of Selectmen. Most of the legal fees relate to an application (since withdrawn) to build condos, including affordable units, for seniors on a one acre parcel on Nearwater Lane. The Committee unanimously agreed to assign it to the **P&Z** (primary) and **F&B** (secondary) Committees. Later in the meeting, the Committee unanimously agreed to place this matter on the Agenda for the RTM's 3/20/06 meeting.
- **Board of Education Pension and \$102,000 Appropriation:** Apparently, there was a funding shortfall due to a reporting or recording error due to miscommunications between the Board of Education and Board of Finance. The Committee debated whether it would be appropriate to assign the matter to the Education Committee, and ultimately agreed to assign this matter to the **F&B** (primary) and **Education** Committees, because the Education Committee is concerned with the Board of Education's budget. Mr. Thorne abstained from the vote. Later in the meeting, the Committee unanimously agreed to place this matter on the Agenda for the RTM's 3/20/06 meeting.
- **DHS Landscaping and \$100,000 Appropriation:** Mrs. Cary has generously donated \$100,000 for landscaping at DHS. The gift has been delivered to the

Board of Education, but must be properly appropriated by the RTM in order to be spent. Mr. Davis commented that gifts to the Board of Education should be accepted and recorded using Generally Accepted Accounting Procedures to assure that (1) the money is spent in accordance with the donor's wishes, and (2) that the same item isn't presented as a budget matter to be paid for by the Town. The Committee unanimously agreed to assign this matter to the **F&B** Committee only. Later in the meeting, the Committee unanimously agreed to place this matter on the Agenda for the RTM's 3/20/06 meeting.

The Committee then reviewed the status of the following pending matters:

- **Charter Changes re: Purchasing Practices.** This matter has been assigned to the RTM's **TGS&A** and **F&B** Committees. Mr. Warren reported that the TGS&A Committee will hold a public hearing about this matter prior to its regular meeting on 3/6/06, and that the matter could be ready for the RTM's 3/20/06 meeting. Mrs. Armour noted that Mr. Hovell has asked whether the RTM should hold a special meeting on 3/6/06. Apparently, Mr. Hovell is concerned that attendance at the RTM's 3/20/06 regular meeting may be spotty because that is the first day after the public school vacation. The Committee declined to schedule a special meeting and placed the Charter Changes re: Purchasing Practices item on the 3/20/06 RTM agenda.
- **Code Changes re: Boats and Harbors.** Mr. Swenson and Mr. Warren both expressed their belief that the Board of Selectmen has not acted on this matter yet. Mrs. Armour said that she would confirm that. The Committee agreed to defer assigning the matter to RTM Standing Committees until its 2/27/06 meeting.
- **Proposed Changes to Chapter 33 of the Code of Ordinances (Parks and Recreation).** This matter has been assigned to the RTM's **TGS&A** and **Parks & Rec** Committees. Mr. Swenson reported that the Parks & Rec Committee met and sent the proposed changes to the Parks & Recreation Commission. He added that the Commission would be meeting on 2/15/06, but that its primary focus now is the Weed Beach improvement project. Mr. Warren stated that TGS&A is ready to report the matter to the RTM. He added that TGS&A would prefer to have Parks & Rec's blessing, but that his Committee is ready to proceed on 3/20/06. The Committee unanimously agreed to place the matter on the Agenda for the RTM's 3/20/06 meeting, noting that it could be pulled if necessary.
- **General modifications of the Darien Code of Ordinances.** Mr. Warren agreed to call Town Counsel to get a black-line version of the Ordinances so that the TGS&A Committee can plainly see the proposed modifications in context and consider them.
- **Naming the Ad Hoc Committee that will review best practices in Town Hall finance functions.** Mr. Morton, Mr. Wenger and Ms. Pontius will review the present volunteers' qualifications and seek others from within (by making an announcement at the 3/20/06 meeting) and outside of the RTM. Mr. Thorne suggested that the Ad Hoc Committee's name and focus should reflect a concentration on cash.
- **Non-Partisanship Rules for the RTM.** The Committee agreed to form a Sub-Committee consisting of Mr. Thorne, Mr. Davis and Ms. Riccardo to draft guidelines for RTM members that can be presented as part of the members'

regular orientation. Mr. Thorne will schedule the Sub-Committee's first meeting.

The Committee then finalized the order of the Agenda items for the RTM's 3/20/06 meeting as follows:

- 1. Proposed Changes to Chapter 33 of the Darien Code of Ordinances (Parks and Recreation).**
- 2. Charter Changes re: Purchasing Practices.**
- 3. Appropriation for DHS landscaping.**
- 4. Appropriation for the Board of Education pension.**
- 5. Appropriation for Planning and Zoning legal fees.**
- 6. Appropriation for DHS cost overruns.**

The Committee noted that if a quorum fails at any point after the appropriate commencement of the 3/20/06 meeting, that any action taken thereafter may be overturned at the next RTM meeting that is attended by a quorum of its members.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Vickie Riccardo, Clerk